

1 & 2 Timothy

Study Workbook
“Pillar of Truth” Series

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By Chad Sychtysz

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The First Epistle to Timothy (1 Timothy)

Introduction

The New Testament epistles that we call “1 and 2 Timothy” are personal letters written by the apostle Paul to a fellow evangelist named Timothy. According to Acts 16:1-3, Paul first encountered Timothy in Lystra while on his first missionary journey. Timothy’s mother was a Jewess, but his father was a “Greek”—either a man of literal Greek descent, or simply a Gentile (as the term “Greek” was sometimes used, as in Rom. 1:16). Paul “wanted this man [Timothy] to go with him,” which meant that Paul wanted him as a companion on his journeys and missionary work, requiring that Timothy be circumcised. (The implication is: Timothy was not circumcised because his father was not a Jew, but the Jews traced their ancestry through the mother, so he was considered a “Jew.” While circumcision is not necessary for becoming a Christian, Paul did not want his uncircumcision to become a stumbling block to the Jews to whom Paul and Timothy would preach.) He was a young man when he joined Paul’s entourage, likely in his early 20s.

Paul, who apparently had no children of his own, served as a father figure to Timothy, and thus treated Timothy as his adopted physical son (1 Tim. 1:18, 2 Tim. 1:2), as well as his “beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:17). Timothy, for his part, treated Paul with great respect, and “served [him] in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father” (Phil. 2:22). Paul considered Timothy his “kindred spirit,” and claimed that “no one else” could represent Paul better than him (Phil. 2:20). “The character of Timothy as set forth in the Scriptures is one of rare beauty. There is not an intimation in the divine record that there was ever a failure of his faith.”¹ It is no wonder, then, that Paul sought Timothy’s company when he faced his inevitable execution, as implied in 2 Tim. 4:6-9.

To prepare him for this difficult ministry, Paul (and others) laid their hands upon Timothy to set him apart for this work and impart a “gift” to him (1 Tim. 4:14, 2 Tim. 1:6). However, there is not a single miraculous gift attributed to Timothy in the New Testament (NT), so we are at a loss to know for certain the exact nature of this “gift.” Marshall Patton, for one, thinks that Timothy was not chosen by Paul to accompany him on his journeys, but that the Holy Spirit Himself had Paul set the young man apart for this work. This view makes Timothy’s “gift” not a miraculous endowment (like the “spiritual gifts” in 1 Cor. 12:4-11), nor was the laying on of Paul’s hands to impart such a miraculous ability. The “gift” was, in fact, Timothy’s having been selected by the Holy Spirit for such an honorable work.² This seems quite plausible, but not conclusive.

¹ David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles* (vol. 5): *1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, ed. J. W. Shepherd (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1983), 120.

² Marshall Patton, *Truth Commentaries: The Books of 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Bowling Green, KY: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 2001), xviii-xx.

Purpose and Theme: It appears that Timothy was in Ephesus at the time of Paul’s writing of 1 Timothy, and there are implications that Paul himself had been there with him prior to this (see 1 Tim. 1:3 and 2 Tim. 1:18). The specific instructions that Paul writes in his epistle to Timothy do not seem to be newly-given information, but more of a recap and reminder of previously-shared conversations (“as I urged you [when I was with you]”). While he had worked side-by-side with Paul in the past, Timothy is now on his own—or, at least, is separated from his mentor. The apostle Paul would not have to write a letter to someone whom he saw on a regular basis. The implication is that he had trained Timothy for some time (years?) in person, but now has left him in Ephesus (as he had left Titus, another evangelist, in Crete—Titus 1:5) in order to accomplish far more than they could have done together in the same place. As with his epistle to Titus, Paul’s epistle to Timothy could also be produced to show those who challenged him (Timothy) that he received his instruction directly from an apostle of Jesus Christ. Thus, this would provide a historical and retrievable record of Paul’s commission to Timothy—not only for Timothy’s own benefit, but also to silence the claims of his detractors. This would also explain why he opens the letter by identifying himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 1:1) and why Paul says other things to him that he already knows.

Ephesus was a difficult place to be a minister of the gospel. It was the capital city in the Roman province of Asia Minor since the time of Octavius “Augustus” Caesar. In Paul’s day, the city was growing and prosperous, with a population of about 100,000.³ It boasted one of the best harbors of the province and was a major crossroads of trade and travelers in the ancient world. Paul made considerable effort establishing a church in Ephesus (Acts 19) and spent nearly three years there (Acts 20:31), often teaching in what was called the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10). The city of Ephesus was immersed in cultic idolatry, particularly the worship of Diana (a.k.a. “Artemis of the Ephesians,” cf. Acts 19:28), and was home to the infamous Temple of Diana, one of the most magnificent temples to have ever been built. “It is probable that there was no religious building in the world in which was concentrated a greater amount of admiration, enthusiasm, and superstition.”⁴ It was also a city filled with the practice of magic and sorcery, as implied in the burning of books in Acts 19:18-19). All said, Ephesus was a large, culturally-diverse, and complex ancient metropolis. Not only did Paul become very familiar with it, but he sent (or brought) Timothy there to provide teaching, stability, and leadership for its church.

Beyond the city (and church) of Ephesus itself, the entire early church faced what William Barclay rightly calls “speculative intellectualism” and what Philip Towner calls “an amalgam of Jewish, Christian, and ascetic elements.”⁵ Such smug elitism produced unprofitable discussions and

3 Philip H. Towner, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 37.

4 W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 423.

5 William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible: The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975), 5; Towner, *TNICNT*, 44.

senseless questions; it was characterized by pride, arguments over words, myths, and genealogies (1 Tim. 1:4, 6:20, 2 Tim. 2:14, et al). Perversions of the gospel, spurious teachings, and arrogant men trying to make a name for themselves in the church threatened the sound doctrine and well-being of many churches. “This heresy was obviously one which was a playground of the intellectuals, or rather the pseudo-intellectuals of the Church.”⁶ Specifically, some men denied the future bodily resurrection, likely claiming that the only “resurrection” that Christians experience is the *spiritual* “new life” upon one’s conversion (2 Tim. 2:18; see Rom. 6:4). The church (then, as now) was in need of sound teaching and qualified leadership, and the authority for these things had to come from an authoritative source: an apostle of Christ. We get the impression that what Paul wrote to Timothy about Ephesus was far more general than limited; in other words, these were not merely local issues, but brotherhood ones.

While Paul’s first epistle to Timothy, and his epistle to Titus, are personal letters in the truest sense, they also have “ecclesiastical significance,”⁷ give important direction for the church (the *ekklesia*, from which we get our word “ecclesiastic”). They provide valuable information about church organization—specifically, the appointment of elders and deacons; more generally, the role of older men and women.⁸ Both epistles imply that elders and deacons are normal and expected roles within each congregation. The implication is that *without* such recognized leaders and servants, churches suffer from lack of direction, lack of unity, and a general state of unproductivity. All groups of people need to be *well-managed* in order to accomplish anything effectively and efficiently; this is as true in the secular world as it is in the religious world. Groups of Christians need to be led by capable leaders *and* attended by genuine servants. Men (and, in their own roles, women) who know very well the gospel of Christ and its practical applications will give a congregation an extreme advantage over a group of Christians that does not have such wisdom and experience. A church that cannot defend the truth *or* refute false doctrine will ultimately have its teaching compromised; men who are rooted and grounded in the word of God can prevent this (see Col. 2:6-7, Titus 1:9-11). In order for a church to participate in being a “pillar and support of the truth” (cf. 1 Tim.

6 *Ibid.*, 5.

7 *Ibid.*, 1. William Mounce agrees: “Timothy knew Paul’s theology and did not need to be taught. Much, if not all, of the teaching in the PE [i.e., pastoral epistles] is directed toward the church. Even though the bulk of 1 Timothy is intended for the Ephesian church, it is still a personal letter style. As is expected of any personal letter, the vocabulary, style, and subject matter are different from more formal letters written to churches as a whole. ... This is why 1 Timothy starts on a note of authority, why there is no greeting as expected, why Paul discusses topics that may sound unusual when writing to a friend (e.g., 1 Tim 1:12-17; 2:7), and why he ends with a greeting to ‘you’ (plural)” (*Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 46: *Pastoral Epistles* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000], lviii; bracketed words are mine).

8 “This First Epistle may refer not to the first organization of the Church under its bishops, or elders and deacons, but to the moral qualifications laid down at a later period for those officers when scandals rendered such directions needful. Indeed, the object for which he left Timothy at Ephesus he states (1 Tim. 1:3) to be, not to organize the Church for the first time, but to restrain the false teachers. The directions as to the choice of fit elders and deacons refer to the filling up of vacancies, not to their first appointment” (Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* [electronic edition; database © 2012 WORDsearch Corp.], “Introduction”). (This source will hereafter be cited as “JFB, *Commentary*.”)

3:15), it must be properly organized, doctrinally sound, and actively evangelistic (both internally and externally). Paul—a master church-builder—knows all these things very well, and thus instructs his fellow ministers (namely, Timothy and Titus) to make sure the churches are well equipped to carry out their work indefinitely.

Paul’s language in 1 and 2 Timothy is markedly different than in his other epistles, indicating a change in his vocabulary, diction, and emphasis.⁹ Some see this as an indication that Paul really *did not write* these epistles, but there is no need for this.¹⁰ Rather, it is indicative of a man who is well-read, well-traveled, and has been influenced by far more writing and speaking in the cosmopolitan world of the Roman Empire than he was years (even decades) earlier. Also, Paul is addressing different issues facing the church, and new instructions (especially for church organization), which can easily account for different language or forms of expression. Paul’s excursions into different parts of the world—Illyricum, Dalmatia, Spain, and elsewhere—certainly confronted him with people, cultures, diction, and even idiomatic expressions that he may never have heard previously. Furthermore, it is believed that Paul’s letters to Timothy (and Titus) were written much later than all the other epistles, and long after his first imprisonment that is described in Acts. Thus, Paul is in a different season of life than when he wrote to the churches in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, etc. This

9 Barclay notes that 306 words in the so-called pastoral epistles occur nowhere else in any of Paul’s letters, and 175 of these words occur nowhere else in the New Testament (*Letters*, 9-10).

10 Some liberal theologians are not convinced that the so-called pastoral letters (i.e., 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) are genuinely Pauline. They suggest that these letters are possibly pseudonymously written—that is, they are the work of someone else (possibly in the 2nd century) who falsely identified himself as a renown author in order to ensure that his work would be received as authoritative. Of course, this idea undermines all the apostolic authority of these works. Kelly says, “The modern reader who feels an initial shock at what he takes to be fraud should reflect that the attitude, approach, and literary standards of that age were altogether different from those accepted today. The author who attributed his own work to an apostle was probably sincerely convinced that it faithfully reproduced that great man’s teaching and point of view” (J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1960], 5). But what of the shock of realizing, by accepting this view, that this sucks every bit of authenticity and doctrinal authority out of these letters? Or, how can a fake author write a letter that denounces fakery and hypocrisy and not be self-condemned? Furthermore, such a creative assessment does not change the fact that, regardless of the “literary standards” invoked, an author who poses as Paul *is* fraudulent, since he poses as one of Christ’s hand-picked apostles writing divinely-inspired instructions. Kelly cites several key criteria that convinces him that these epistles are probably “post-Pauline,” but it is not worth our effort to examine these in detail here. Every one of them is based on scholarly conjecture, namely: we must question whatever Paul says in his letters that does not fit his travel itinerary supplied in Acts; Paul is limited to certain vocabulary words in his epistles; since the pastorals have certain words unique only to them, therefore they must not be written by Paul; Paul’s sentence structure and “voice” seem different in the pastorals than in other epistles; etc. Each of these can be sufficiently rebutted, yet the larger point is this: if these letters *are* genuine—as every objective-minded approach proves them to be—then we should study and obey them; if they are not, then we ought to consign them to the trash. Some want to straddle the fence (a so-called “fragments hypothesis”; *ibid.*, 28-29): *some* of the material is Paul’s, the *rest* is someone else’s. In such a contrived case, we are confronted with the impossible task of deciding—on our own authority, or that of someone who claims to know better—which is which. All said, our present study maintains that these letters were indeed written by Paul the apostle, carry the weight of apostolic authority, and are a genuine part of the New Testament canon. Even Kelly himself, after many pages of what may be considered scholarly ruminations, begrudgingly admits that all the evidence “tips the scales perceptibly...in favour [*sic*] of the traditional theory of [Pauline] authorship” (*ibid.*, 34; bracketed word is mine).

happens to all of us, over time, as we become more learned, more cultured, and more acclimated to a level of thinking and communicating that exceeds our earlier years. (I can attest to this personally: my present style, vocabulary, and emphases are markedly different from those of twenty years ago.) All said, there is no reason to suspect that Paul was not the author of these epistles simply because his word choices in them are different than before. Not only this, but these epistles are so filled with personal and intimate details that it is simply unbelievable that someone else could have written them in Paul's name. The exposition of the texts will bear this out in due time.

Author and Date: The so-called “pastoral epistles” (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus) are among the most universally-accepted epistles of the New Testament (NT) canon.¹¹ (“Canon” in this context refers to the authoritative collection of apostolic, divinely-inspired, and doctrinally-sound writings which comprise what we call the “gospel of Christ.”) Many of the early church “fathers” cited from or referred to these epistles as being genuinely written by the apostle Paul.¹² Aside from revisionist criticism from relatively modern liberal scholars, no one has adequately provided a better conclusion than that Paul is the author of 1 and 2 Timothy.

The authenticity of the PE [i.e., pastoral epistles] was not questioned until the nineteenth century. This does not make the raising of this question wrong; but it must be admitted that it is a modern concern. The external evidence for the authenticity of the PE is strong and consistent with the self-witness of the PE. This places the burden of proof on those denying authenticity [rather than the many scholars and historians who have upheld it for nearly 1,900 years].¹³

In his epistle to Titus, Paul instructs Titus how to deal with the difficulties he faces with the church on the island of Crete. Paul's instructions to another (and likely younger) protégé, Timothy, are more general but also broader in scope. Both epistles bear internal evidence of being written later in Paul's own ministry, especially due to the nature of the problems that both preachers (Titus and Timothy) are required to confront. These three letters are the only ones written by Paul to co-workers in the ministry of the gospel—at least, the only ones that have survived to the present. This

11 “It may be time to say farewell to the nomenclature ‘the Pastoral Epistles.’ This term, which many trace back to Paul Anton in the eighteenth century, has become something of a restraining device. ...The term ‘PE’ is no longer helpful, even if it is convenient, for what is gained by economy of reference is more than lost by the weight of the baggage the term has accumulated along the way. It constantly conjures up the notion of an indivisible unit”—i.e., letters than *must* be taken together rather than singly (Towner, *TNICNT*, 88-89). I agree entirely. The use of the word “pastor” is also being misused when applied to Timothy and Titus—ministers of the gospel—rather than its biblical reference to church elders (as in Eph. 4:11). “Pastor” means “shepherd,” which is the role of an overseer (church elder), not a minister. The modern denominational use of “pastor,” as well as the very *role* of the modern “pastor” as one who presides over an entire church, is foreign to the New Testament pattern.

12 JFB, *Commentary* (electronic edition), “Introduction” to 1 Timothy. Specifically, these “fathers” include: Polycarp, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria.

13 Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, lxix; bracketed words are mine.

study rejects any claims that Paul was not the author of 1 and 2 Timothy, that someone else wrote these epistles under his name, or that these letters were written in the timeframe covered by Acts.

General Outline: The lesson plan of 1 Timothy is as follows. A separate lesson plan of 2 Timothy will be presented at the beginning of the comments on that epistle.

- Salutation + Paul's Warnings to Timothy (1:1-11)
- Paul's Own Experience with Mercy and Grace (1:12-20)
- Prayers in the Assembly (2:1-8)
- Instructions for Women (2:9-15)
- Candidates for Elders and Deacons (3:1-13)
- Proper Conduct in the Household of God (3:14 – 5:2)
- Instructions Concerning Widows and Elders (5:3-25)
- The Pursuit of Godliness (6:1-21)

Abbreviations Used in This Workbook:

- OT: Old Testament
- NT: New Testament
- JFB: Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown (*Commentary on the Whole Bible*)
- ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
- PE: Pastoral Epistles, namely, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus
- NAS/NASB: New American Standard Bible (updated version)
- KJV: King James Version (Bible)
- ASV: American Standard Version (Bible)
- ESV: English Standard Version (Bible)
- HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible

Lesson One: Salutation + Paul's Warnings to Timothy (1:1-11)

Salutation (1:1-2): “Paul” is the renowned persecutor-turned-apostle who is easily one of the most influential men in Christ’s church (1:1). His conversion story can be found in Acts 9:1-19, but the rippling effects of his subsequent apostolic ministry have been felt throughout the last 2,000 years. “Apostle” means “messenger” or “one sent (on a mission),” but carries the authority of the one who sent him as well as that of the message itself. In this case, the authority behind Paul’s apostleship is both God the Father and Christ the Son, as more fully expressed in the “commandment of God.” Elsewhere (as in 1 Cor. 1:1) this is expressed as the “will of God.” Whatever God wills, thus He commands to be done (compare, for example, Mat. 7:21 and Rom. 16:26). God laid this moral responsibility upon Paul, and Paul accepted it and did everything in his power to fulfill it. Just as Christ personally appointed the original twelve apostles, and then Matthias (to replace Judas, who killed himself—Acts 1:15-26), so He appointed Paul (Rom. 1:1). “God our Savior” is most appropriate, since God the Father is the possessor of and ultimate authority behind all salvation. “[A]nd of Christ Jesus, who is our hope” is hardly an afterthought, but acknowledges the reason why God’s salvation can be given to believers. If it was not for Christ, we would have no hope; if anyone dies outside of Christ, then he has lost all hope (as stated in 1 Thess. 4:13).¹⁴

“[T]o Timothy...” (1:2)—one of Paul’s dearest and most trusted protégés (see “Introduction”). Paul refers often to Timothy as his “true child”—i.e., as his own genuine, biological son—and regards himself as Timothy’s father-figure (see 2 Tim. 1:2, where Timothy is referred to as Paul’s “beloved son [or, child]”). Indeed, Paul rarely addresses Timothy in writing without revealing a personal affection for him. “In the faith” is used synonymously in the NT with “in the Lord,” “in Christ,” or “in the body (church).” “Grace, mercy, and peace” all rise or fall together: it is impossible to have any one of these without the others. Grace refers to God’s gift of forgiveness and salvation (and all that this involves); mercy is God’s withholding of judgment in view of one’s repentance; “‘Grace’ has reference to the sins of men; ‘mercy’ to their misery. God extends His grace to men as they are guilty; His ‘mercy’ to them as they are miserable.”¹⁵ Peace is the favorable union between God and the believer once mercy and grace have been imparted. “Believers do not just feel peaceful; they actually are at peace with God, and the feelings of peace and security that evolve from such a relationship are more secure than mere emotions.”¹⁶ While these words are used often in the

14 “The ancient world was well aware of its sin. ...The ancient world knew its moral helplessness all too well; and Christ came, not only telling men and women what was right, but also giving them the power to do it. Christ gave to those who had lost it the hope of moral victory instead of defeat” (Barclay, *Letters*, 22).

15 Trench, quoted in JFB, *Commentary* (electronic edition), on 1:2. “Grace is a comprehensive word, gathering up all that may be supposed to be expressed in the smile of a heavenly king, looking down upon his people” (F. J. A. Hort, quoted in Barclay, *Letters*, 27).

16 Mounce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 12.